Is there an Ideologically-Biased Broadening of the Concept of Modern Architecture?

Questioning the Limits of Postmodernism's Inclusivism and Testing a Further Expansion[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines and discusses the postmodern historiographical revision of the concept of modernism in architecture. On the one hand, it highlights the deconstruction of the militant meta-narrative of the Modern Movement and the consequent expansion of the boundaries of modern architecture. On the other hand, it shows that remnants of an evaluative scale of modernisms linger on and the ideologically motivated refusal to draw parallels with the contextual architectural approaches found in 20th century dictatorships still endures. Crucial contributions for reframing the architecture of fascisms are underlined and the requirements for its critical historiography are propounded. To test them the architecture of the Portuguese New State – regarded as particularly modernization-resistant – is characterized as modern, thus supporting, in conclusion, a further extension of modernism's scope.

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Postmodern widening of the scope of modern architecture

[1] In the context of the historiographical revision driven by the impact of postmodernism on scientific production, in recent decades the concept of modernism in the arts has been the subject of a major effort of questioning and enlargement. In the sub-category of the history of modern architecture this process led to investment in three inter-related aspects.

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[1] This article is a revised and extended version of the paper "Widening the scope of modernism: is there room for Portuguese fascist architecture?" presented at the International Conference *Southern Modernisms: Critical Stances through Regional Appropriations*, ESAP, Oporto, 19-21 February 2015.

[2] First, it stimulated the deconstruction of the meta-narrative of the Modern Movement,[2] woven by the first wave of theorising about this phenomenon, featuring the contributions of Nikolaus Pevsner,[3] Emil Kaufmann,[4] Sigfried Giedion,[5] and Henry-Russell Hitchcock.[6] The selective, teleological and allegedly cohesive interpretation of architectural development was then questioned. Accordingly, it was sought to enshrine as a universal standard what was actually only one among several other manifestations of modernity: the functionalism and rationalism proposed and practised in particular by Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe.

[3] Sometimes misrepresenting and at others over-simplifying the journey and the thinking of the theoretical architects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a strategically more basic and easily absorbed version of their ideas and design was exported for international consumption. Functionalism became an orthodoxy with its own (reductionist) formal creed and committed to fight the "infidels". Especially the polytheists: the eclectics who "worshipped" and handled a number of historicisms. Presented as a "single truth" and as the inevitable and ultimate culmination of the evolution of architecture, it became established as the imagery model of modern society. This association, inculcated in depth, still contaminates today, with greater or lesser awareness, our visual culture of modernity and the understanding of this complex and multifaceted process that we call modern architecture.

[4] The architectural languages that distanced themselves from the above-mentioned formalist archetype during the first half of the twentieth century and, as a result, were silenced by the inaugural militant historiography of the Modern Movement, asserted themselves as an attractive subject for study after the Second World War. The history of modern architecture was re-written from then on. Its plurality was emphasised,[7] a critical attitude was adopted[8] and the position of dissident and previously marginalised

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[2] Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge 1999.

[3] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement. From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, London 1936.

[4] Emil Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier. Ursprung und Entwicklung der autonomen Architektur*, Wien 1933.

[5] Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture. The Growth of a New Tradition*, Cambridge 1941.

[6] Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture. Romanticism and Reintegration*, New York 1929; Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style. Architecture since 1922*, New York 1932.

[7] Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture*, New York 1973.

[8] Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture. A Critical History*, London 1980.

architects was even reversed: their production would, after all, play a saving role to restore the human dimension of architecture.[9]

[5] Second, the multiple architectural experiments that sought to reconcile modernity with tradition and the specificity of the place have been retrieved and converted into a growing research topic. While Bernard Rudofsky's influential work, *Architecture without architects. A short introduction to non-pedigreed architecture* (1964), was not the first to focus on this heritage,[10] it did give it unprecedented visibility. Meanwhile, Kenneth Frampton conceived "critical regionalism" as a tool to fight the homogenising philosophy of the International Style and agenda for an architectural practice able to harmonise, critically instead of sentimentally, the universal with the local, the contemporary with the ancestral, industrialization with local techniques and materials.[11] Art historiography mirrored the centrality of the identity issue – the so-called "return of ethnicity"[12] – through, above all, the attention paid to the dialogue between the modern and the vernacular.[13] This line of research has helped to challenge the evaluative differentiation between high and low culture, so dear to cultural studies.

[6] Finally, there was a significant expansion of the geography underlying the conception of modern architecture as a result of the postmodern and

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[9] Colin St. John Wilson, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture. The Uncompleted Project*, London 1995.

[10] As an example, see: Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, *Arquitectura popular em Portugal*, Lisbon 1961.

[11] Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in: *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, London 1985, 16-30.

[12] Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in: *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall et al., Cambridge, MA 1996, 596-634, here 623.

[13] Emma D. Coad, "Catalan Modernista Architecture: Using the Past to Build the Modern," in: *Spanish Cultural Studies. An Introduction. The Struggle for Modernity*, ed. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, New York 1995, 58-62; Anthony Geist and José Monleón, eds., *Modernism and its Margins. Reinscribing Cultural Modernity from Spain and Latin America*, New York 1999; Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf, eds., *Vernacular Modernism. Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment*, Stanford, California 2005; Vincent Canizaro, ed., *Architectural Regionalism. Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition*, New York 2007; Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi, eds., *Modernism and the Middle East. Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, Seattle 2008; Jean-Francois Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean. Vernacular Dialogues and Contested Identities*, London 2010; Michelangelo Sabatino, *Pride in Modesty. Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy*, Toronto 2010; Alexandra Cardoso, Joana Cunha Leal and Maria Helena Maia, eds., *Surveys on Vernacular Architecture. Their Significance in 20th Century Architectural Culture. Conference Proceedings*, Oporto 2012; Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia and Alexandra Cardoso, eds., *To and Fro. Modernism and Vernacular Architecture*, Oporto 2013; Patricio del Real and Helen Gyger, eds., *Latin American Modern Architectures. Ambiguous Territories*, New York 2013.

postcolonial refutation of the Eurocentric paradigm of modernism, seen as exclusivist and tending to rank artistic experiences according to the degree of approximation to a canon proclaimed as the "unique" or the "best" expression of modernity on a universal scale. Reactively, the margins and fringes, the divergences and minorities, hybridism and syncretism, fragmentation, discontinuity and otherness were overrated. Diversity, "premise, and justification, of the politics of multiculturalism"[14] was celebrated.

[7] The "provincialisation"[15] of Europe and the resulting challenge of the "cultural centrality" of the West[16] is evident in the historiographic effort to document the diaspora of the Modern Movement, from Bulgaria to Argentina, from Japan to New Zealand, and consequent phenomena of adaptation, acclimatisation and translation of a formula originating in Europe.[17] This global expansion is mirrored in the choice of places where the International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO) has held its biennial international conferences, from 1990 to the present. After European cities were chosen for the first five conferences, countries such as Brazil (2000), the USA (2004), Turkey (2006), Mexico (2010) and South Korea (2014) followed suit.

[8] The sector of large-scale temporary exhibitions, an area able to anticipate or reflect, legitimate and disseminate the historiographical twists and turns, describes the epistemological change of direction explained above. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York is mentioned as one of the most striking examples. In 1932, it hosted the famous International Exhibition of Modern Architecture, which established the functionalist primer as the International Style, the style that would surpass all other styles.[18] It ended up, not without some irony, by becoming a checklist of formal principles. The book launched alongside this event and written by its organisers, Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style. Architecture since 1922*, spread a reductive axiom around the world: this (particular) architecture of volumes defined by smooth surfaces without any trace of embellishment, with a flat roof, regular and tending to be

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[14] Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism. A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, London 1998, 204.

[15] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, N.J. 2000.

[16] Stuart Hall, *A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade*, Rio de Janeiro 2006, 83 (my translation).

[17] Dennis Sharp and Catherine Cooke, eds., *The Modern Movement in Architecture. Selections from the DOCOMOMO Registers*, Rotterdam 2000.

[18] Terence Riley, *The International Style. Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, New York 1992.

standardised, was synonymous with (all) modern architecture. The part was taken for the whole.[19]

[9] In 1943, the same museum organised an exhibition entitled *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old (1652-1942)* and its catalogue, thus boosting the allure of modern Brazilian production for architects and critics. As demonstrated by Eduardo Costa, the initiative established the relevance of a modernity in symbiosis with traditional architectural values.[20] Gradually, the Brazilian case acquired a model antidote status against the orthodoxy of an increasingly questioned Modern Movement. Finally, in 1964, with the opening of the exhibition *Architecture Without Architects*, deserved attention was claimed for the "non-pedigreed", "anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural" architecture, the vernacular.[21]

An ideologically-biased broadening: who's left?

[10] Although the borders of the concept of modernism have been expanded, resistance, especially that of an ideological nature, to recognising the modernity in the architecture of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes still persists. This is, in my view, a trace of the "operative"[22] historiography of the Modern Movement. It is adverse to a comprehensive conception of the modern and it established a connection between architecture and politics, according to the following deterministic view: a socialist or democratic society would emerge as a result of a new formal language (tending to be abstract and rooted in the metaphorical or literal reference of the machine), in turn arising from new materials and construction techniques (with emphasis on iron and reinforced concrete).

[11] The excessive connotation of modernism with progressiveness/ left wing politics, which many would consider dated and superseded, survives in recent scientific literature, as is seen in the attempt by Christopher Wilk to determine the common denominator for sundry cultural expressions that the term modernism covers.[23] The exceptions are rare and justified only by their formal characteristics. Indeed, the small list of buildings that, although built during a fascist regime, is generally allowed within the boundaries of modern architecture, has an imagery that is coincident with, close enough

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[19] Joana Brites, "Movimento Moderno. De resposta universal a hipótese de século," in: *Estudos do Século XX* 9 (2009), 28-43.

[20] Eduardo Costa, *'Brazil Builds' e a construção de um moderno, na arquitetura brasileira*, unpublished master thesis, University of São Paulo 2009.

[21] Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects. A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture*, Albuquerque 1964, 2.

[22] Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*; Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, New York 1980; Josep Maria Montaner, *Arquitetura e crítica*, Barcelona 2007.

[23] Christopher Wilk, "Introduction: What was Modernism?," in: *Modernism. Designing a New World. 1914-1939*, ed. Christopher Wilk, London 2006, 11-21, here 14.

to or on the path of the Modern Movement. Examples include the Casa del Fascio by Giuseppe Terragni (Italy, Como, 1928-1936), the National Institute of Statistics by Porfirio Pardal Monteiro (Portugal, Lisbon, 1931-1935), the Sotiria Hospital laundry and kitchen unit by Periklis Georgakopoulos (Greece, Athens, 1939-1940), the Estacas Complex by Sebastião Formosinho Sanchez and Ruy d'Athouguia (Portugal, Lisbon, 1949-1958), and the Tarragona Civil Government building by Alejandro de la Sota (Spain, 1956-1964). If anything, it paves the way for an architecture that may be classed as a critical reappraisal of the Modern Movement, capable of ensuring its survival in the post World War II period (for example, the Portuguese Leça de Palmeira swimming pool by Álvaro Siza Vieira, 1966).

[12] The artificiality of modern architecture inventories in countries that have experienced more or less extended periods of authoritarian or totalitarian government has started to cause some discomfort and doubt even in those who run them.[24] In fact, often, the architects whose works are acclaimed produced many others that are omitted because they do not fit in with the fixed standards. A monologue about modern architecture is thus perpetuated, one that cannot see that modernisation, as a complex and destructuring phenomenon, led to multifaceted and conflicting answers.

[13] How the relationship of twentieth century architecture with tradition is interpreted (in both its national and regional facets; either in its erudite or popular dimension) is the aspect that most denotes the current bias. When this connection occurs against a conservative liberal, demoliberal and democratic backdrop, historiography sees it as an integral part of modern architecture. In the context of postmodern euphoria, it is even praised as prophylaxis against the universal ambitions of the Modern Movement, as a reaction against the "placeless condition" of the Enlightenment project and signal of the stimulating (and never so dazzling) diversity of the world. However, when the link between tradition and modernity that some authors have called the "third way"[25] is recorded at both ends of the political spectrum, the phenomenon turns into an archenemy: the ultimate example of the anti-modern. The exception boils down to the Italian rationalists in the service of Benito Mussolini, a situation, which, however, as Alan Colquhoun rightly emphasises, "has always been an embarrassment to architectural historians".[26]

[14] This double standard is backed by the alleged possibility of distinguishing the quality of the resulting hybridism – labelled as artificial,

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[24] Juan Antonio Cortés, "Usos versus representação/ Use versus representation," in: *Arquitectura do Movimento Moderno. Inventário Docomomo Ibérico. 1925-1965 = Architecture of the Modern Movement. Iberian Docomomo Register. 1925-1965*, ed. Xavier Costa and Susana Landrove, Lisbon 1997, 164-171, here 166.

[25] Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the 'Third Way'," in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (1996), 293-316.

[26] Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, Oxford 2002, 183.

mimetic, sentimental, folksy, pastiche or kitsch in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In all others it is classed as critical, innovative and genuine, able to engender a synthesis (not a simple collage) that is informed, authentic and contemporary. However, this is a subjective (as it implies a valuation) and Manichean argument which, like all those based on a binary opposition, proves to be far from foolproof when faced with the complexity of reality. The application of this thesis would prompt many claims to the status of exception which, instead of confirming the rule, would evince the fragile operability of the initial premise.

[15] The theoretical contributions on the concept of tradition confirm the artificiality of that dichotomous distinction. Since they cannot be summarised here, I have chosen to highlight the growing challenge to distinguishing between genuine and false tradition. While in their classic work, *The invention of tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger showed the wide dissemination and effectiveness of "invented traditions" (fictional or very recent) in nation building processes,[27] more recent studies tend to assert that "all traditions are manufactured" and that, therefore, "authenticity is an elusive, perhaps non-existent quality".[28]

[16] Benedict Anderson coined the expression "imagined community" to define national identity.[29] Since then it has become commonplace to display the "imaginative", "relational and situational nature of identity", a dynamic stage of negotiations and reappraisals. There is no "essence" of a collective, simply a "perceived as real" fiction.[30] What sets the architecture of the fascisms apart in this context is nothing more than the radical reduction of the freedom to propose alternative versions of identity to the permitted ones. A dispassionate view of the built environment in the twentieth century would conclude that the inventiveness of attempts to reconcile modernity and tradition does not necessarily depend on the type of political regime.

[17] Given the above, it seems pertinent to readdress a question that was thought to be superseded: are we actually prepared to deem modern the twentieth century architecture which is in dialogue with the past? Is the abstractionist and allegedly a-historic rationalism not still regarded, even unconsciously, as the norm, the perfect and complete manifestation of modernism in architecture? At first sight, everything suggests that tradition and modernity are currently agreed to be inescapably interconnected. As

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[27] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge (UK) 1983.

[28] Dell Upton, "'Authentic' Anxieties," in: *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage. Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad, London 2001, 298-306, here 300-302.

[29] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983.

[30] Elsa Peralta and Marta Anico, "Introdução," in: *Patrimónios e identidades. Ficções contemporâneas*, ed. Elsa Peralta and Marta Anico, Oeiras 2006, 1-11, here 2-3.

Dell Upton notes, "the adjectives *traditional* and *modern* are themselves artefacts of modernity: tradition did not exist until it was imagined as the defining complement of modernity".[31] Along the same lines, Jane M. Jacobs points out that "modernity is not without tradition and, in fact, requires an idea of it in order to know itself. In this regard, tradition is either disdained (something to be left behind in the rage for the new) or lamented (as something now lost)."[32] "Time-space distanciation", driven by modernity, makes the local and the global become "inextricably intertwined".[33] Globalization,

rather than doing away with tradition, [...] has delivered new conditions for its emergence; installed new mechanisms for its transference; and brought into being new political imperatives for its performance. Under globalization, tradition has been reshaped and enlivened in a range of unexpected ways.[34]

[18] We should therefore not be surprised that, in the architectural field, internationalism has developed not only simultaneously, but also dialectically, with the strengthening of national and regional/ local identities. Moreover, even when it comes to the designated pioneers of modern architecture (often hastily portrayed as strong advocates of a universal language without historical footprint), a growing number of studies show that far from operating a break with the past, indeed, they were related to it in a complex way.[35]

[19] However, the postmodern historiographical revisionism of the role and place of tradition in the development of modern architecture is still far from supplanting the paradigm in place back then in its assessment. Evidence of this is provided by the event that would theoretically be least likely to substantiate this claim. I am referring here to the 9th International DOCOMOMO Conference on the theme "Other Modernisms", focusing precisely on the heterogeneity of modern constructions. This meeting took place in Turkey in 2006 and resulted in the clear perception that, alongside or in opposition to the stateless primer of the Modern Movement, contextual architectural approaches existed across the globe throughout the twentieth century. Instead of representing the exception or a rare or residual manifestation, their high incidence has become indisputable. The search for a national modern architecture is an international phenomenon. Belgium, Chile, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Japan, Korea,

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[31] Upton, "'Authentic' Anxieties," 298.

[32] Jane M. Jacobs, "Tradition is (not) Modern: Deterritorializing Globalization," in: *The End of Tradition?*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad, New York 2004, 29-44, here 30-31.

[33] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford, California 1990, 108.

[34] Jacobs, "Tradition is (not) Modern: Deterritorializing Globalization," 30-31.

[35] Trevor Garnham, *Architecture Re-Assembled. The Use (and Abuse) of History*, New York 2013.

Latvia, Mexico, Norway, Russia, Scotland, Slovakia, Slovenia are among the countries that reveal modern dialogues with local and/ or national culture.[36]

[20] Nonetheless, as often happens in much of postmodern literature, the effort to enhance and disseminate the otherness ultimately strengthens and essentialises the paradigm that it initially intended to question. The greatest epistemological turnaround – one that describes a 360 degrees angle – eventually brings us back to the starting point (zero degree angle). Hiroyasu Fujioka seems aware of this when he opens the article on the Japanese case by stating that "*Other Modernisms* implies that there are two kinds of modernisms; original and perfect modernism, and imperfect or hybrid modernism, influenced by the former".[37] Other inputs, such as that by Ivan Nevzgodin and Lyudmilla Tokmeninova on modern architecture in Eastern Russia, mould the maintenance of an evaluative scale of modernisms, contaminated for ideological reasons. This attitude, summarised in the title of their essay, "Modernism repressed, otherness blooms", leads them to defend this interpretative thesis:

while abroad the works of the constructivists and the rationalists were greatly prized, in their own country they were supported only by some advanced politicians, although the buildings of 'Other Modernisms' were greatly appreciated by the masses from their very beginnings. This, later on, allowed the concept of socialist realism (Sotsrealism) to crystallize, so that the true modernists were forced to turn into 'Other Modernists'.[38]

[21] The space given to public buildings of fascist regimes remains marginal, whereas the purpose of the Conference – to show the reverse of the International Style – enabled and justified a more extensive analysis of this reality. The presence of a small group of works is conceded, mostly built after World War II and fitting into the category of "critical regionalism". In addition, although constructions that respect a cleansed, stylised and monumental classicism are regarded as "other modernisms", the refusal to document the blatant parallels with Nazi art (among others) still endures.

Towards a more comprehensive concept of modernism: reframing the architecture of fascist regimes

[22] On the one hand one notices the fascination with modernist plurality and on the other a falsely monolithic narrative is sustained in the analysis of the architecture of fascism. This aims to convince us of three points: a) the pre-dictatorial periods were culturally cohesive and progressive, revealing a

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[36] Panayotis Tournikiotis et al., eds., *Docomomo Journal* 36 [Special issue: Other Modernisms: A Selection from the Docomomo Registers] (2007).

[37] Hiroyasu Fujioka, "Otherness and the Ripple of Modernism," in: *Docomomo Journal* 36 (2007), 61-63, here 61.

[38] Ivan Nevzgodin and Lyudmilla Tokmeninova, "Modernism Repressed, Otherness Blooms," in: *Docomomo Journal* 36 (2007), 85-87, here 85.

whole-hearted acceptance of an abstractionist and technological language; b) the fascisms therefore corresponded to gaps, when artistic modernism was relatively abruptly put to an end, with, at the most, "perverted" and "impure" versions of it being consented to; c) after a period of more or less "tolerance" of the modern, these political systems fine-tuned and imposed a single artistic logic characterised by a "slippage" or "backtracking" to conservative formulae, very occasionally and strategically permeable or subject to a process of erosion in times of decline or on the final stretch of the authoritarian/totalitarian regime.

[23] The historiographical contributions committed to dismantling the aforementioned vision are growing. The long genealogy of the quest for a national art is being exposed.[39] It is found that the rejection of the rigidity of functionalism was by no means a unique characteristic of the ultra-nationalist regimes, or architects, critics and reactionary theorists.[40] The dilemmas and debates about the definition of architectural modernity that mark the early years of the twentieth century were found to have led to a multiplicity of approaches.[41] It is stressed that totalitarianisms incorporated tools and concepts developed by the vanguards of the twenties and thirties[42] and that, even in that most oppressive of contexts, Hitler's Third Reich, these vanguards were not completely annihilated.[43] The heterogeneity of the aesthetic options, delivered by the fascisms and symptomatic of their inclusive *modus operandi*, is illustrated.[44] In some

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[39] Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination. Swedish Art of the 1890s*, Berkeley 1998; João Leal, *Etnografias portuguesas (1870-1970). Cultura popular e identidade nacional*, Lisbon 2000; Barry Bergdoll, *European Architecture. 1750-1890*, New York 2000; David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell, *The Geographies of Englishness. Landscape and the National Past. 1880-1940*, New Haven 2002; Nuno Rosmaninho, "A 'casa portuguesa' e outras 'casas nacionais'," in: *Revista da Universidade de Aveiro – Letras* 19/20 (2002-2003), 225-250.

[40] Hubert-Jan Henket and Hilde Heynen, eds., *Back from Utopia. The Challenge of the Modern Movement*, Rotterdam 2002; Canizaro, ed., *Architectural Regionalism*; Garnham, *Architecture Re-Assembled*.

[41] Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture*; Wojciech Leśnikowski, ed., *East European Modernism. Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary & Poland Between the Wars*, London 1996.

[42] Igor Golomshtok, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China*, New York 1990; Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity. Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*, Westport, Conn. 2003.

[43] Brandon Taylor and Wilfried van der Will, eds., *The Nazification of Art. Art, Design, Music, Architecture, and Film in the Third Reich*, Winchester, Hampshire 1990; David Britt, ed., *Art i poder. L'Europa dels dictadors. 1930-1945*, Barcelona 1996; David Crowley, "National Modernisms," in: *Modernism. Designing a New World. 1914-1939*, ed. Christopher Wilk, London 2006, 341-373.

[44] Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany. 1918-1945*, Cambridge, MA 1968; Angel Llorente Hernández, *Arte e ideología en el franquismo. 1936-1951*,

cases, the similarity is even acknowledged between architecture built under fascism and that which was to characterise the post-war period.[45] Finally, the affirmation of a tendency committed to regarding the artistic production of fascisms as modern is detected.[46]

[24] The construction of a critical historiography of the architecture of fascist regimes requires, in my view, three conditions: a) renunciation of the general link between modernism and the political left; b) conclusive rejection, as a gauge, of the imagery and the Modern Movement assumptions of the 1920s and 1930s; c) adoption of a broader concept of modernism. It can be found in the pivotal work of the renowned historian and theorist of fascism Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (2007). Since this is not the place for a summary of either this book or its reviews, I merely stress one of its most fruitful contributions that has been followed by and influenced the work of

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Madrid 1995; Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff, eds., *Fascist Visions. Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, Princeton, N.J. 1997; Lutz Koepnick, "Fascist Aesthetics Revisited," in: *Modernism/ Modernity* 6 (1999), 51-73; Carsten Strathausen, "Nazi Aesthetics," in: *Culture, Theory and Critique* 42 (1999), 5-19; Walter Adamson, "Avant-Garde Modernism and Italian Fascism: Cultural Politics in the Era of Mussolini," in: *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6 (2001), 230-248; Ulrich Schmid, "Style versus Ideology: Towards a Conceptualization of Fascist Aesthetics," in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6 (2005), 127-140; Jonathan Huener and Francis R. Nicosia, eds., *The Arts in Nazi Germany. Continuity, Conformity, Change*, New York/ Oxford 2006; Joana Brites, *O capital da arquitectura. Estado Novo, arquitectos e Caixa Geral de Depósitos (1929-1970)*, Lisbon 2014.

[45] Michelangelo Sabatino, "The Politics of Mediterraneità in Italian Modernist Architecture," in: *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean. Vernacular Dialogues and Contested Identities*, ed. Jean-Francois Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, London 2010, 41-64.

[46] Dennis P. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy. Italian Architecture. 1914-1936*, New York 1988; Walter Adamson, *Avant-garde Florence. From Modernism to Fascism*, Cambridge, MA 1993; Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism. Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*, Stanford, California 1993; Roger Griffin, "Nazi Art: Romantic Twilight or Post-Modernism Dawn?," in: *Oxford Art Journal* 18 (1995), 103-107; Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff, eds., *Fascist Visions*; Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism. Art and Politics under Fascism*, New York 2000; Mark Antliff, "Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity," in: *The Art Bulletin* 84 (2002), 148-169; Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum, eds., *Donatello Among the Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, Ithaca, New York 2005; Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism. The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France. 1909-1939*, Durham 2007; Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, Houndmills/ New York 2007; Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad. Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism*, London/ New York 2007; Roger Griffin, "Modernity, Modernism, and Fascism: A 'Mazeway Resynthesis'," in: *Modernism/ Modernity* 15 (2008), 9-24; Brites, *O capital da arquitectura*, 235-267.

various art historians.[47] In a postmodern climate featuring distrust of global interpretive systems, Griffin provides a new conceptual paradigm that helps us understand the coexistence and articulate, in a clear and unique "maximalist" definition of modernism (which the author does not reduce to the sphere of aesthetics), the diversity of artistic reactions, sometimes conflicting but all palingenetic, in the face of the perception of the alleged decadence resulting from Western modernisation.[48] This is essentially characterised by the decline and the transformation of traditional institutions and social structures, the spread of rationalism, liberalism and secularisation, the widespread faith in progress and technological and scientific progress, urbanisation and industrialisation, the development of a mass society and the globalization of capitalism.

[25] In the field of visual arts, the term modernism would encompass both the individual pursuit of spirituality recognised in Kandinsky, and the intention of the constructivists in placing art in the service of the revolution. More important as support for the thesis that this article proposes: "fascist modernism" is no longer seen as an oxymoron. Modernism in architecture was manifested as much in the belief that a standardised construction would meet the pressing social and economic needs of a contemporary city as in the fight against a "denationalising" and "amnesic" globalization through an aesthetic capable of currently reflecting and driving the timeless *Volksgeist*, felt to be under threat. Apparently conflicting behaviours always emerge in historical periods of transition and/ or severe transformation, as it is the case of modernity, in face of which one feels, like Marx depicted in 1848, that "all that is solid melts into air".[49] Consequently, I subscribe to the short yet embracing definition of Iain Boyd Whyte, for whom "modernism in architecture, as in all arts, exists only as a response to the contradictory conditions of modernity".[50]

Conclusion: a trial run with the Portuguese case

[26] The confirmation and frequent overestimation of the traditionalist and agrarian dimension of the "Estado Novo" (1933-1974), fascism[51] with

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[47] See, among others, the references indicated in the previous footnote.

[48] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 54-55.

[49] Harold Joseph Laski, ed., *The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels. With the Original Text and Prefaces*, New York 1975, 136.

[50] Iain Boyd Whyte, "Modernity and Architecture," in: *Tracing Modernity. Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City*, ed. Mari Hvattum and Christian Hermansen, London 2004, 42-55, here 53.

[51] There is no consensus on the classification of the "Estado Novo" (New State) as fascism in Portuguese and international historiography. Since it is beyond the scope of this article, I do not discuss it and have adopted my position without substantiating it. I am also aware that Roger Griffin regards Salazar's *Estado Novo* as a "para-fascism". However, I do not feel that this invalidates the application of his

António de Oliveira Salazar at the helm until 1968, has hampered the historiographical recognition of the modernising side that is also part of it. As a result, its architecture[52] is a particularly useful case study to test the conceptual boundaries of modernism.

[27] The thesis that modernisation, conveyed by two major doctrinal streams, industrialism and the neo-physiocratic agrarian reformism, was never a goal in itself, but a concession in favour of the regime's survival, is shared.[53] Therefore, it materialised gradually (slowly, reconciling inherited barriers with those established in the meantime) and pragmatically (with compromises, not shaking the balance of diverging interests that existed in the base, secured or to be seized, in support of the dictatorship).

[28] However, like other fascist regimes, the Portuguese dictatorship did not intend to tread the path back to the past. As Stuart Hall points out,

sometimes national cultures are tempted to [...] retreat defensively to that 'lost time' when the nation was 'great' and to restore past identities. [...] But often this very return to the past conceals a struggle to mobilize 'the people' to purify their ranks, to expel the 'others' who threaten their identity, and to gird their loins for a new march forwards.[54]

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concept of modernism to the Portuguese reality, as I in fact had the opportunity to ascertain, having the author addressed this possibility.

[52] For a further discussion of the architecture of the New State see: Nuno Portas, "A evolução da arquitectura moderna em Portugal: uma interpretação," in: *História da arquitectura moderna*, ed. Bruno Zevi, Lisbon 1973, 687-744; José-Augusto França, *A arte em Portugal no século XX: 1911-1961*, Lisbon 1974; Nuno Teotónio Pereira and José Manuel Fernandes, "A arquitectura do fascismo em Portugal," in: *O fascismo em Portugal. Actas do colóquio*, vol. II, Lisbon 1982, 533-551; Pedro Vieira de Almeida and José Manuel Fernandes, *História da arte em Portugal,* vol. 14: *A Arquitectura Moderna*, Lisbon 1986; Sérgio Fernandez, *Percurso: arquitectura portuguesa, 1930/1974*, 2nd ed., Oporto 1988; Margarida Acciaiuoli, *Os anos 40 em Portugal: o país, o regime e as artes. "Restauração" e "celebração"*, unpublished doctoral thesis, New University of Lisbon 1991; Ana Tostões, *Os verdes anos na arquitectura portuguesa dos anos 50*, Oporto 1997; Ana Tostões, "Arquitectura portuguesa do século XX," in: *História da arte portuguesa*, ed. Paulo Pereira, Lisbon 1997, 507-591; Fernando Pernes, *Panorama. Arte portuguesa no século XX*, Oporto 1999; Pedro Vieira de Almeida, *A arquitectura no Estado Novo: uma leitura crítica. Os Concursos de Sagres*, Lisbon 2002; José Manuel Fernandes, *Português suave. Arquitecturas do Estado* Novo, Lisbon 2003; Ana Tostões, *Arquitectura moderna portuguesa: 1920-1970*, Lisbon 2004; Ana Vaz Milheiro, *A construção do Brasil. Relações com a cultura arquitectónica portuguesa*, Oporto 2005; Nuno Rosmaninho, *O poder da arte. O Estado Novo e a cidade universitária de Coimbra*, Coimbra 2006; Ana Tostões, *A idade maior: cultura e tecnologia na arquitectura moderna portuguesa*, Oporto 2015.

[53] Fernando Rosas, *Salazarismo e fomento económico (1928-1948)*, Lisbon 2000.

[54] Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 615.

[29] Indeed, the rescue of the homeland historical legacy, exorcised of its "unhealthy" episodes, was intended to act as a spiritual substrate to face the mission of national regeneration to be undertaken in the present. And there was a concrete programme for this. The "Estado Novo" (the very name is palingenetic) devised and applied with relative success a comprehensive project of intervention in Portuguese society. The totalising vocation of the project was expressed in the size of the apparatus created for mobilising and inculcating its ideology, so that a "new man"[55] would be created. Far from being reduced to a simply reactionary phenomenon, Salazarism was a political form of modernism.

[30] Faced with an allegedly sick nation, after more than a hundred years of monarchical and republican liberalism, it was presented as a countervailing "National Revolution". It publicised the programme to build a new order as one of resuming the old, genuine, course of the nation. In the words of Oliveira Salazar, "our duty is not to save a society that is rotting, but to utilise the old healthy beams to launch the new society of the future".[56] In many of his public addresses, the head of state described the task undertaken as a "work of regeneration",[57] "revolutionary" and "national salvation".[58] The new era that was beginning was conceived rhetorically as a rebirth, an essential feature of what Roger Griffin calls the quest for an "alternative modernity".[59]

[31] The historiography of the cultural policy of the "Estado Novo" has predominantly examined the devices and events that, for internal and external consumption, produced a consensus on the portrait of a rural, popular Portugal, faithful to its origins and essence, untouched by city anarchy.[60] The promotion and enforcement of a "nationalist-ruralist-traditionalist model of popular culture"[61] are undeniable. However, it should be noted that the inculcation of this mental archetype operated alongside the fostering of the image of an effective, rational and entrepreneurial state. Folk groups, festivals, parades and villages were promoted simultaneously with the modern general plans for the country's urbanisation and a wide-

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[55] Fernando Rosas, "O salazarismo e o homem novo: ensaio sobre o Estado Novo e a questão do totalitarismo," in: *Análise Social* 157 (2001), 1031-1054.

[56] António de Oliveira Salazar, *Discursos e notas políticas*, vol. 2: *1935-1937*, Coimbra 1937, 44 (my translation).

[57] António de Oliveira Salazar, *Discursos e notas políticas,* vol. 1: *1928-1934*, Coimbra 1935, 153 (my translation).

[58] Salazar, *Discursos e notas políticas*, vol. 1: *1928-1934*, 318 (my translation).

[59] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 31.

[60] Vera Alves, *Arte popular e nação no Estado Novo. A política folclorista do Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional*, Lisbon 2013.

[61] Daniel Melo, *Salazarismo e cultura popular (1933-1958)*, Lisbon 2001, 375 (my translation).

ranging programme of public works supervised by engineers and the catalyst of the latest generation of architects.

[32] The same room where once the embroidery of a particular region was on display housed the modern art exhibition of the National Propaganda Secretariat.[62] Simultaneously, the "creative fantasy of rustic people"[63] was exported abroad, and the participation of the Portuguese vanguard was secured in international exhibitions, even when these artists were linked with the opposition to the regime.[64] Under the wing of state commissioning we find either Almada Negreiros or Severo Portela Júnior, Francisco Keil do Amaral or Cottinelli Telmo.

[33] The regime's public architecture reflects this inclusive logic, typical of fascisms, both in terms of the political and ideological positioning of the architects hired, and at the level of the aesthetic languages adopted. Among these one can find a palette ranging from the imagery of rationalism (the Filipa de Lencastre High School in Lisbon, by Jorge Segurado, 1932-1940) to the cleansed reinterpretations of classicism (the Courthouse of Oporto, by Raul Rodrigues Lima, inaugurated in 1961), mediaeval (Church of Saint Joseph in Coimbra, by Álvaro da Fonseca, 1953) and Baroque styles (Caixa Geral de Depósitos, State bank, branch in Guarda, by Luís Cristino da Silva, 1939-1942), including regionalism (the Inn of Santa Luzia, in Elvas, by Miguel Jacobetty Rosa, 1942) significantly imposed and often invented. In spite of this relative heterogeneity, a core aspiration can be discerned that runs through the entire output of the "Estado Novo", particularly from the second half of the 1930s. It is a catchphrase, never defined with absolute clarity and therefore tested by approximation, trial and error: the demand for a national modern style, a construction style that was at the same time contemporary and suited to the locality and/ or specificity of the country. This agenda accommodated various formulations, depending on the evolution of the regime itself, the type of public building in question, the place for which it was intended, the profile of the people responsible for its appraisal and the margin granted to the architect-designer.

[34] To bend Homi K. Bhabha to the purposes of this paper, it could be argued that "negotiation rather than negation […] makes it possible to conceive of the articulation of antagonistic or contradictory elements".[65] Salazarism never upheld anachronism or the practice of an archaeological type of architecture. It did not reject modernity entirely, but disliked

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[62] Vera Alves, "O povo do Estado Novo," in: *Como se faz um povo. Ensaios em história contemporânea de Portugal*, ed. José Neves, Lisbon 2010, 183-194, here 190.

[63] Alves, "O povo do Estado Novo," 184 (my translation).

[64] The doctoral thesis by Ulrike Zech under way at the Technical University of Berlin will document and illustrate the image of modernity which the New State conveyed at international exhibitions.

[65] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994, 25.

disaggregating, standardising, stateless foreignness, embodied in its view by the architectural abstractionist internationalism (dubbed "boxes"). An alternative modernity was thus aspired to and achieved; far from being an exclusive diktat of the state, this idea of an alternative modernity pervaded the discourses of the timid specialist press, the opinions generally expressed by the civil society and the dilemmas of the architects themselves.

[35] Critics and government proposed a "modernism where a dominant note takes the monotony of cosmopolitism from the new style",[66] "our renewal",[67] that is, a "balance" that would impose neither "absolute nudism nor sentimental nationalism".[68] This would be a kind of building "that is within our era but, at the same time, within our race and our climate",[69] "a modern and... local architecture",[70] "a successful fusion in which the essential of our profound substance and the accidental of our time intermingle and bear fruit, to make its mark on an era".[71]

[36] It was underscored that "no-one wants it [architecture], in its attempt to be deeply national, to become xenophobic and systematically refuse interesting and fertile suggestions from abroad".[72] The solution lay in the "combination of extraneous but duly screened elements with our architectural traditions and our ability to create".[73] The political time was seen, moreover, as "exceptionally favourable for taking forward a daring initiative to renew and 'Portuguesify' our architecture" since "Salazar, by reconciling the Portuguese people with Portugal, resuming the strand drawn from our purest traditions, restoring the national sentiment in its most authentic expression, paved the way for a broad and prolific renewal".[74]

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[66] "Transformação duma velha construção abarracada, numa bela vivenda em estilo português," in: *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 4 (April 1930), 25-26, here 26 (my translation).

[67] Tomás Ribeiro Colaço, "Casas portuguesas," in: *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 12 (March 1936), 3-4, here 3 (my translation).

[68] AXIAL, "A liberdade na arte," in: *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 9 (December 1935), 9 (my translation).

[69] [António de Oliveira Salazar in an interview by António Ferro in 1932] António Ferro, *Salazar. O homem e a sua obra*, Aveiro 1978, 204 (my translation).

[70] Francisco Costa, "Por uma arquitectura própria. A arquitectura moderna," in: *Arquitectura* 20 (August-September 1931), 80 (my translation).

[71] Fernando Pamplona, "Os nossos inquéritos. Arquitectura de amanhã," in: *Diário da Manhã* 4572 (25 January 1944), 3-4, here 4 (my translation).

[72] Pamplona, "Os nossos inquéritos. Arquitectura de amanhã," 4 (my translation).

[73] Fernando Pamplona, "Os nossos inquéritos. Arquitectura de amanhã," in: *Diário da Manhã* 4565 (18 January 1944), 4 (my translation).

[74] Fernando Pamplona, "Os nossos inquéritos. Arquitectura de amanhã. Conclusões," in: *Diário da Manhã* 4585 (8 February 1944), 3-4, here 4 (my translation).

[37] The applause, with Salazarism in full sway, for the "model" activity of Frank Lloyd Wright, considering him, right next to a photograph of the Fallingwater House, as a "remarkable American architect [...], keen supporter of architectural nationalism",[75] is thus understood, without contradiction. Equally perceivable is the praise, printed on the pages of the organ of the "União Nacional" (the organisation that replaced the republican multi-party system, led by Oliveira Salazar in perpetuity since 1934), for the architecture of Finland, a country that "ultimately found its 'modernism' with instinctive safety". The journal emphasizes the return, after a "period of insecure Romanticism", to "the pleasant Finnish simplicity", highlighting the role of architect Eliel Saarinen in establishing "that lovely materialistic elegance which is the essence of the new Finnish architecture".[76] The admiration expressed by architect Raul Lino and the writer Tomás Ribeiro Colaço (both generally considered conservative) for Italian modern architecture also makes sense.[77] The first stressed that

some of the Italian artists – certainly the most interesting – knew how to draw on the architecture of ancient Rome, not as it would have been, performing a scholarly interpretation, but impressively, from its remains in the numerous monuments of the eternal city; inspired by the gaunt ruin, stripped of its opulent coatings; they captured what there is of monumentality and structural depth in these remains, thus extracting the essence of a new architecture, imbued with noble severity, free from artificiality, reflecting the steely qualities of strength and at the same time a depurative feature which characterizes contemporary art, but nevertheless, essentially Roman architecture [...]. Italian architects thus learned to proudly trim the heavy legacy of a past of overwhelming greatness, and, by balancing in their skilled hands this magnificent legacy, [...] projected again the voice of Rome across generations that will come. So these artists are able to give us one of the rare pleasures that art can give us [...]: a sense of continuity in time.[78]

[38] Ribeiro Colaço also detects a palingenetic attitude in the Italian art path: "move on and look ahead, no doubt, but in the logical path that the past drew [...]. Mussolini [...] restores the great lessons to life, the great beauties of the past."[79] In the same line of thought, he named as an example to follow the Brazilian architectural practice of a modern "colonial".

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[75] "Arquitectura de hoje pelo estrangeiro," in: *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 37 (April 1938), 22 (my translation).

[76] "Arquitectura das cidades finlandesas," in: *Diário da Manhã* 4552 (5 January 1944), 3 (my translation).

[77] Raul Lino, "Ainda as casas portuguesas," in: *Panorama* 4 (September 1941), 9-10, here 10; Tomás Ribeiro Colaço, "Nota," in: *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 24 (March 1937), 25.

[78] Raul Lino, "Ainda as casas portuguesas," in: *Panorama* 4 (September 1941), 9-10, here 10 (my translation).

In his perspective, this nation "recreates and respects" the Portuguese tradition, therefore "incorporates modernism with features of its own particular character".[80]

[39] The quest for a national character in art in general and a 're-Portuguesifying' of architecture in particular, albeit not born with the New State, was radicalised and took on a totalising dimension and an unprecedented operational capacity. Indeed, the legal fabric set up for choosing architects and for approving and overseeing public works projects – in which spheres and mechanisms of local (municipalities) and central (various ministries, the Court of Auditors, Council of Ministers, and so forth) decision-making joined together – ensured the functioning of a coherent and effective system capable of progressively paring down and improving any architectural proposal, in the light of the aesthetic ideals supported (while evolving).[81]

[40] In conclusion, trying to find remnants of the Modern Movement in the public architecture of Portuguese fascism with a view to legitimising its modernist nature would be "to miss the point", as Roger Griffin has said about the same effort in the Nazi case.[82] Whether or not we find them (and in fact they have not been entirely eradicated), the public architecture of the "Estado Novo" was modern. Indeed – even with (or precisely due to) its traditional garment – this architecture was an instrument used to reshape the Portuguese society and to modify its worldview and its attitudes towards life. In other words, a device for reinventing the present and imagining alternative futures. The "longing for immutability in a changing world"[83] or, to use an expression of Anthony Giddens, the need for "ontological security"[84] was linked with the ambition to be the visible face of the new chapter of national history. Therefore, its most archaic features do not hurt its palingenetic nature at all. Similarly, the nurtured nationalist cultural, folklorist and rural policy retained an underlying purpose of social transformation: to shape the worldview of the people by forging an equivalence between the values espoused by the regime and the supposed features of Portuguese identity.

[41] The way the state architectural output was envisioned and conditioned is a fine example of the practice of what Zygmunt Bauman called the

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[79] Tomás Ribeiro Colaço, "Nota," in: *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 24 (March 1937), 25 (my translation).

[80] Tomás Ribeiro Colaço, "O exemplo do Brasil," in: *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 23 (February 1937), 1-8, here 8 (my translation).

[81] Brites, *O capital da arquitectura*, 83-185.

[82] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 294.

[83] George L. Mosse, "The Political Culture of Italian Futurism: A General Perspective," in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (May-June 1990), 253-268, here 264.

[84] Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, vii.

modern "gardening state".[85] Reacting selectively to the process of modernisation, healthy species were encouraged, plants that could still be useful were domesticated, weeds were pulled up and crops were monitored. In the new garden, certainly metamorphosed by changes in the climate conditions, new pasts were manufactured and the commitments and balances of forces were managed in each present, in order to guarantee a future.

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[85] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Ithaca, New York 1991, 20.